

REMARKS:

Claims 1-13 are in the case and presented for consideration.

The specification has been updated with the patent number issued on the parent application and claim 13 has been corrected to satisfy 35 U.S.C. 112. The application and claims are believed to be in proper form.

Claims 1-3 and 6-13 have been rejected as fully anticipated by U.S. patent 5,709,785 to LeBlanc. Although the Examiner is correct that LeBlanc refers to means for evacuation of the load-lock station, these means are only mentioned in LeBlanc at column 3, lines 48-51 and are not shown. LeBlanc does not therefore actually teach or suggest the use of a pump unit shown at 34 in Fig. 2 of the present application, communicating directly by a pump opening 30 with a transport chamber 3 and further where the pump opening 30 is sealed by one of the rams 15 with its closure configuration 17, all called for in claimed 1. Instead, the person of ordinary skill in the art would assume that LeBlanc uses a vacuum pump which is arranged away from the transport chamber and communicates with the chamber via a pipe. LeBlanc only says that "conventional" means are used and this would refer to the conventional remotely located vacuum pump connected by a pipe. Certainly LeBlanc would not suggest or teach using the same ram that carries the closure configuration to also close the pump opening and further for the pump unit to communicate with the transport chamber through this same pump opening.

The dependant claims are believed to distinguish the invention even further from the LeBlanc reference.

The Examiner has also rejected claims 1, 2 and 4-16 as being fully anticipated by U.S. patent 6,416,641 to Schertler. Schertler is likewise insufficient to teach the important

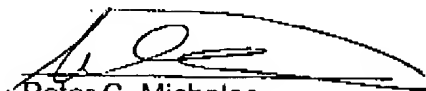
features of the present invention identified above. Schertler at column 3 lines 13-17, discloses a pump port 36 in Fig. 1 of the reference which is clearly a conduit and not the type of pump opening claimed, which can be sealed by the same ram that carries the closure configuration.

The two references are thus closer in teaching to each other than to the requirements of claim 1 with regard to "a pump unit (34), communicating via pump opening (30) with the transport chamber (3) as well as also for the coating station (21); wherein...forming a sealed closure."

The dependant claims are also believed to even further distinguish the invention over the Schertler reference.

The application and claims are now believed to be in condition for allowance and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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